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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of a public library in Clay Springs, a rural community in Navajo County in northeastern Arizona, with neither financial support from taxes (the town is not incorporated and there is no county library) nor the services of a professional librarian. Descriptions are included of: (1) activities that promoted community awareness of the need for improved library services; (2) activities that raised funds to renovate an existing facility when the library had to move out of the school building to make space for a kindergarten; and (3) the on-going relationship between Clay Springs and the Department of Library/Media Services at Northland Pioneer College, which conducts on-site seminars and workshops to help the community's residents keep abreast of current trends in providing library services in small rural communities. (GL)

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YOUR LIBRARY DREAM CAN BECOME A REALITY TOO: THE CLAY SPRINGS, ARIZONA STORY

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Northland Pioneer College is a decentralized community college serving Northeastern Arizona. In response to a need demonstrated in rural Arizona, a library/media technology program was established in 1986 to deal primarily with the needs of library staff members serving in rurally isolated communities. Most of the libraries in these communities are one staff member public libraries, as well as one staff member school libraries, serving elementary, junior high and high schools. Up until 1986, no attempt was made to specifically train individuals working in these library settings. Many of these individuals have had little or no training, and most are not directly supervized by a graduate professional librarian with an M. L. S. degree. Still, quality service can be given in even the most remote areas, and even the smallest of communities can have dreams. This is the story of one of those dreams which has come true. The dream came true primarily through the efforts of hard working community individuals who would not take no for an answer. The Department of Library/Media Technology at Northland Pioneer College continues to assist with the dream by providing training and spirited coaching, but the real stars in this story are the committed individuals and community organizations of Clay Springs (Navajo County).

Arizona--a small, sleepy Mormon community of 600, some thirty miles south of Show Low, Arizona on the way to Payson, through Heber, another Navajo County community. Unlike Clay Springs, Heber is experiencing steady growth, not only as a summer haven, but as a year-round home for retirees. Library development is anything but sleepy in Clay Springs, however. In many ways, the Clay Springs example will serve to give strength and courage to other communities with similar dreams. In fact, citizens from nearby Heber have taken an active interest in what is happening there, with an eye toward improving library services there.

Formal library instruction in Clay Springs began during the spring semester, 1989. A library/media technology instructor from Northland Pioneer College conducted two all-day Saturday workshops. Fifteen individuals enrolled. Those completing the sixteen hours of instruction where awarded one semester hour of credit. During the workshops, a brainstorming session was held to help Clay Springs residents discover what their dreams for their library were.

In the 25+ years I have spent in Arizona libraries, miracles have happened all around the state--from North to South, and East to West.

What do you do if you have a dream like the Clay Springs residents had, but no support--financially, or otherwise? First of all, the Clay Springs residents never lost sight of their dream. So strong was their enthusiasm,

that they had their instructor firmly convinced that miracles would happen--and miracles did happen!

Soon, ways were found to publicize the dream. The Clay Springs residents talked to anyone who would listen. When they were encouraged, they expanded their presentation. They soon found that their listeners turned into supporters, and individuals and groups began to champion their cause. Individuals and groups enlisted for support were not librarians, but they knew the benefits of excellent library services. Residents quickly enlisted the aid of these individuals and groups. Library board members gave them plenty of ammunition, and support for the library mushroomed, almost overnight.

Library board members found unique ways to bring community residents into the library setting. Ways to raise funds were discussed, including a talent show, and crafts fair. Many individuals grew visibly excited about the possibility of writing a history of the community, with every family representated. The completed histories would be sold, with profits going to library support.

New ways were found to get people into the library, and each new library patron became a supporter of the Clay Springs dream. Library board members asked friends, spouses, and neighbors for suggestions on how to boost library awareness in the community. Clay Springs certainly had an iron clad will, and because of this, they found interesting avenues to expand and intensify library support.

They found that library support can come from unlikely places. No stone was left unturned. Total community support evolved for this dream.

Clay Springs receives no tax support for library services because it is unincorporated, and there is no county library in Navajo County. Up until this year, the library had been housed in a room in the school building. Space was provided rent-free, and the school assumed the cost of utilities. But when the school needed the room for a kindergarten, the library had to move. Luckily, the school owned a small building on the grounds, and the building was made available rent-free for the community library. The building had to be renovated before it could be used for library use. Believers in the Clay Springs dream were carpenters and builders--literally! They have transformed this little building into a very attractive library, complete with two rooms, carpeting, and bathroom facilities. This has been a total community effort. Families worked on this project together. One community minded youngster helped to paint the outside of the building--as high as he could reach.

How did they get the money for the renovation? They held two fund raisers, each raising about $1,300.00 for a total of $2,600. Each fund raiser was held on a separate Saturday. The first fund raiser was a crafts fair. The second was a rideathon for reading. Bike riders solicited pledges for specific distances ridden on their bikes. In

addition, the involvement of several Show Low merchants was actively solicited, and many of the merchants donated or discounted products and services. The end result is a little library that they are very proud of. It is not their final dream, but it is part of a dream that will provide library services for several years.

Northland Pioneer College calls itself the "everywhere college serving Northeastern Arizona." The Department of Library/Media Technology will continue to conduct on-site seminars and workshops to help Clay Springs residents keep abreast of current trends in providing quality library service in small rural communities. This year, an 82 year old student from Heber joined Clay Springs students because she has a dream for library services for Heber. Heber, however, is another story.

Clay Springs residents have proven that they have a strong will to provide these services, and the Northland Pioneer College Department of Library/Media Technology will continue to provide training and coaching. The Clay Springs experience has been estremely rewarding for all those involved, and the staff of the Northland Pioneer College Department of Library/Media Technology is extremely proud to be a part of it.

What is your library dream? How are you going to make it come true? Trying to do it alone is like one hand clapping. It doesn't work. You too, like Clay Springs, can get support. You too, like Clay Springs, can make it work.

Perhaps a community college, like Northland Pioneer College, can assist you with training. Check out the resources of your local community college.

How you achieve your library dream is up to you!